

Matt Bowles: My guest today is Amara Abara. He is a location independent entrepreneur, world traveler and a conversion rate optimization expert who helps seven and eight figure Shopify brands generate more revenue from their existing traffic. Originally from Lagos, Nigeria, he moved to England at the age of 16 to study and then worked for multiple Fortune 500 companies before launching his own fully remote consulting business in 2016. He is passionate about traveling, meditating and optimizing his mind and body for peak performance.

Amara, welcome to the show.

Amara Abara: Hey man, excited to be here.

Matt Bowles: Man, I am so excited to have you here, brother. Let's just start off by setting the scene and talking about where we are recording this from. Today we are in person in Bansko, Bulgaria. And you and I both just last week delivered keynote speeches at the Bansko Nomad Fest. And maybe let's just start with that. First of all, you have spent a whole lot more time in Bansko than I have over the last few years. Can you share a little bit about your experience in Bansko and what it's like here for you, what you think about the town?

Amara Abara: Yeah, I love Bansko. It was actually not a very sort of traditional route in the way I came here. I was like in 2020 I was thinking about traveling because I'd been in London for so long and I was going to this co working space thinking like why am I walking for my flat in Shoreditch, this co working space when I can be working from anywhere in the world. So, I was like, yeah, 2020 is going to be my year of adventure. You know, the final last words. But then came to Bansko and settled in here. I actually came for skiing in the first place. Came to ski because one of my mates was here. He really liked it and in March actually booked a flight to Lisbon because I was meant to be touring the world and adventuring, but I ended up staying for nine months because of COVID.

Actually, it turned out to be a blessing because Bansko is lovely. You've got great diversity in nature. You can go for a cold dip if you want to and you're just like 15 minutes away from where you're living. You can go up the mountains, go for a hike, going to the forest. There's just so much to do out here. And yeah, it's like just really pleasant, really good air quality food and just happens to have a phenomenal co-working space, you know, which puts on really good events. So that's how I end up here.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, I came through here briefly for about a week in 2019. It was in the winter time in the ski season and so now we're back in the summertime. So totally different vibe, but super beautiful, surrounded by mountains and nature and a nice little stream that runs through the middle of town. Really, really cool vibe. But how did you like the Bansko Nomad Fest? What was that like for you?

Amara Abara: Yeah, Bansko Nomad Fest was really cool. I was actually here for the first one in 2020 and it was so cool to meet people from all works of life, you know, just like nomads, like traveling, running their own location, independent projects and businesses. And it just seems to have grown. When I was here for the first time in 2020, I think there was about 70 participants and now we have 500. So, it has grown at astronomical rates. Yeah, it's just met so many cool people from all walks of life, all parts of the world, and that's how we connected. I remember the first time; it was like a month ago. Time flies. When I had the CO working space, I met you and you know, it's like, hey, from America, you seem pretty cool and you told me you'd been to Lagos and nearly lost my mind. I started talking about Afro beats and whatnot and yeah, that's how we connected, right? It's like, it's a great to meet people.

Matt Bowles: Let's talk about that, man. You were born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria, and you grew up and lived there until you were 16. Can you take us back there and talk about what that was like coming up in Lagos?

Amara Abara: Yeah, Lagos is a very interesting place. Really high energy. I guess having not left Lagos was very hard for me to compare it to other places. But now I realize how much energy it's got. People there are really shooting for bigger things. The mindset there is one of a hustler's mindset. There's always a can-do attitude which people have. So, I loved growing up in Lagos, as most Lagosians would know and most Nigerians would know, as a country that's very religious, dominated by Christians and Muslims. So, every Sunday, you know, probably either going to church Friday, probably go to the mosque. So very religious in that sense.

And also, academic attainment achievement is also very important. You don't want to come home with a crappy report card. I can remember one time in primary school, I wasn't a very serious student and I think I came like second to the last person in my class and my dad was like, you want to be a truck pusher? You know, it's like the guys basically pick out garbage up. It's like if you're not careful, you're going to be a truck pusher. So it was that sort of scene where people care a lot about religion, education is really big and love to enjoy themselves as well. This is probably why Afro beats, the thing we love to have fun. Yeah, People are just very friendly.

Matt Bowles: Well, I also want to hear about the transition that you had because growing up in Lagos, your whole life until 16 and then you moved to London, England. Can you talk about what that transition was like for you? Especially when you think back at that age, what that experience was like?

Amara Abara: Yeah, sure. So quite fortuitous. My mum happens to be a British citizen. She was born in England. And so, I'm just really fortunate because there are a lot of people who didn't have that opportunity. And my mom and dad had a conversation about me potentially starting abroad. And it made sense for me to do my A levels in England. So, the best way to do that, especially if you don't have family, you can stay with, you go to a boarding school. That was a transition. We're looking out for, like which schools I could go to. We found a school in the Midlands in the UK is like a place called Skegness that most people haven't heard of. People think it's in Scotland. So, yeah, my dad was like, yeah, I want you to go to Skegness because I know you're a troublemaker and you're probably not going to be able to leave Skegness for London very frequently.

So, yeah, I ended up going to school in Skegness in a very different culture. You see, coming from Nigeria, quite a homogenous country, you know, and then going to England. England, where literally not in Skegness, especially not seeing anyone like me, I actually found it quite liberating in the sense that you could just dive into another culture, learn about them and figure out what they're like. People just think about England being one country, but people that come from north England are very different people that come from southern parts of England. So, it was very interesting for me to come into that and then see how England was so diverse.

Matt Bowles: Yeah. And then when you eventually got to London and you started spending time in the city of London, how was that experience with regard to the level of cultural diversity from all over the world that you find there?

Amara Abara: Yeah, it was really interesting. As I mentioned, Nigeria is very homogenous. So, coming into London, you see people from India, Pakistan, you've seen people from other parts of Africa, because I actually left Nigeria. So, you've seen Ghanaians for the first time, Sierra Leoneans, which was really cool. So, I've seen people from other parts of Europe, like Poland. It's quite a good mix of people, a melting pot of different cultures. You learn a lot; you pick up different things, right. And you see why the country is what it is today because it's sort of allowed an influx of people from many different areas to bring the best of what they've got. So that was really interesting for me to see that.

Matt Bowles: And when you think back on all of this growing up, how did your interest in international travel eventually develop to go outside of Nigeria and outside of England?

Amara Abara: Yeah, I caught the travel bug really early. From when I was a teenager, I really wanted to leave Nigeria. You know, like back in primary school, all my friends would be going abroad. England will typically either be going to London or New York. These are the guys. I've got quite a bit of money, and I really wanted to go as well. Mom, like, when are we going to go on holidays? Because those guys would come back with their Air Force ones and their jerseys. And I'm really jealous because so I really wanted to leave. And I was like, yeah, I just wanted to find the best opportunity for me to leave. And I knew that's going to be through my education, if I do well in school, potentially be going to university abroad. So that was kind of what started it off.

But then when I came to England and saw the diversity of different cultures, I was like, there's more to this than just Europe and England. At school, I was thinking about, okay, what would be another language to learn? And I saw what was going on in China and how the economy was just skyrocketing a phenomenal rate. And I was, okay. I'm going to try and learn Chinese. So, first year university rather than going back to London and looking for like the standard like waiter job at a restaurant, I decided no, I'm going to spend my summer in Beijing. So yeah, it was quite spontaneous. Went out to Beijing and booked a language school to learn Chinese and also stayed with a host family who couldn't speak any English. Which is quite funny because we had to lose a lot of hand gestures at the start. So yeah, that's kind of what started it off and yeah led to further travel.

Matt Bowles: What was the experience like in Beijing because you were only like 19 when you went to do that and that obviously is an extremely different culture than either Nigeria or England. So, when you think back on that time, what was that experience like for you at that age and what impact do you think it ultimately had on you?

Amara Abara: Yeah, I just had a blast. I had a great time. My journey didn't start off really good. So, landing in the airport, I'm not sure if you've been to China or, or maybe other sort of Asian countries. You have a lot of like cab drivers or taxi drivers waiting outside the airport to try to look for fresh meat. I was very naive and gullible and one of them managed to convince me that my language school sent him to pick me up right and bring a fresh faced 19-year-old. I believed him and one thing led to another. Going to the cab and before you know it, I'm like stuck in the middle of nowhere in Beijing. He told me, yeah, that's your language school. I went upstairs, there was like no, this is not your language school. And before I could get back to the cab driver he'd gone with my money. So, I was there stuck with less money and I couldn't find the details of my host parents.

So yeah, it was a bit of a frightening situation. Freaking out a little bit. Thankfully I was able to get in contact with my school. They put me in contact with my host family. But besides that, everything was just in terms

of the experience was just amazing. I couldn't say nothing but nice things about the people I met there. It was very friendly. I wasn't expecting such great hospital hospitality, you know, at 19 went to so many nightclubs there and like had fun, went out with my language school classmates, had really good time and then went to a beer festival actually in Qingdao. Qingdao Joe? Yeah, it's like a Chinese beer festival. That's amazing because it's totally different from the beer festivals you have in England. That was Cool, man. I really love that.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing, man. And then after that kind of coming up in London and coming of age in London, I mean, I also want to ask you about the African diaspora scene in London, the Afro beats scene in. Because this has come to my attention, I feel like, more recently, because after spending time in Nigeria and Ghana and West Africa and really getting into all of these Afro beats, I start looking up all of these artists, man, and like, half of them live in London. Yeah. So, can you share a little bit about that dynamic and what that whole cultural element is like in London?

Amara Abara: Yeah, there's a strong Nigerian community in London. It's either people congregating in London or somewhere in the U.S. this is kind of where we are in terms of concentration. These are the two main diasporas. Right. London or I'd say Texas or New York, but London especially. And the access to England is much easier than other places. And a lot of Nigerians already have relatives there. So, it makes sense that the Afrobeat scene there is also hot. It's really interesting to see how many artists actually were Nigerian artists born and bred in London, like Malik Berry. He's also from London as well. Obviously got Nigerian roots. It's just really interesting to see how it's just blown up over time.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, it's so amazing, man. I want to go back to London specifically to check out some of that kind of stuff now, man. I mean, just amazing things going on there. Well, let me ask you this. Can you talk a little bit about your professional trajectory? So, you get back to England and then as you're going on your career path, I'm super curious about sort of what your journey was that ultimately led you to entrepreneurship.

Amara Abara: Yeah, 100%. So, I did math, university, so got sort of data analytics background, went into consulting at Accenture, and after that, I kind of got disenchanted by the whole consulting thing, kind of shipping you off to different places. Got really good experience from that, but I wanted to sort of dive in more into data. So then worked for a German company as a data scientist. And I just decided, you know what, I've had a good time working, but now I want to do my own thing. And this is kind of what led me into online marketing.

Matt Bowles: Can you talk a little bit about the transition to entrepreneurship from working at a corporate job to making that leap and saying, I'm going to go on my own now. I'm going to build my own business. How was that for you?

Amara Abara: Yeah, that was a bit scary. A lot of people thought I'd lost my mind. Especially my family knows it's all about going to school, get straight A's, get your degree and you work for a stable company. This is kind of what most of my family members are taking so from I was saying to my mom, a couple of my aunties and uncles, like, maybe you want to check up on this guy, Maybe take him to some psychiatric evaluation to make sure he's okay. Who wants to leave this really good job? I just didn't feel like in the sort of corporate space, it wasn't for me. I wanted to have a bit more freedom over my time and where I was. And I didn't think that I could find that there. So, I decided to leave. And as most people do, you probably find something on YouTube. Someone selling like a program and stumbled onto this program. I think he was

selling how to self-publish books on Amazon. This was my first foray into entrepreneurship. I started because I'm very much into health and wellness.

So, I was okay, I'm going to publish a few cookbooks. Publish some cookbooks on the keto diet, vegetarian and like just all sorts of diets. I just published a few books on those and joined the mastermind to improve my business and noticed that a lot of people in this mastermind who are doing self-publishing will actually romance authors and realize actually romance was the place to be when it came to self-published. So yeah, then transitioned into romance publishing and my family really lost their minds. Then it was like, okay, we sent you to school, paid for all these school fees and you studied math and now you're doing romance publishing. Yeah, yeah, it got really hot. So did that for a bit and just really understood because obviously it helped me dive into the dynamics between men and women. You need to sort of flesh that out in the story. So that was quite educated.

But at some point, I was like, I'm not actually reading this book, so I want to sell things I actually care about. And that's when I moved on from there to eCom because I had this dream of one day opening up a supplement brand. So, I was okay, I need to learn about eCom. So transitioned into Facebook ads. Learn a lot about Facebook ads. Had an agency, we're helping eCom clients to do Facebook ads drive traffic. But one thing I noticed was that that they were driving a lot of traffic and brute forcing traffic to the store. But in most cases, these the traffic wasn't really converting. Actually, based on my skill set, my understanding of data being very numerate maybe I should be doing CRO, which is conversion re optimization, so helping them understand where the leaks are on their store by doing some data analysis. And that's how I got into CRO.

Matt Bowles: Well, one of the things that I was super impressed with, just in terms of researching you and hearing your presentation and everything, which I think is the case with most successful entrepreneurs, is that you have chosen a really specific niche specialty. You are an expert in conversion rate optimization specifically for e commerce businesses that are at the seven to eight figure revenue level. Like, you have an incredibly specific target market avatar and incredibly specific niche area of expertise. You do this one thing and you do this one thing for this particular type of clients. And so, I think that's the first thing that I think is really important to note. And what I would love to do with that regard is kind of dive in to a little bit of your expertise, because we have a lot of entrepreneurs that listen to the podcast, even people that run businesses that are not eCom. Most of the principles still apply in terms of understanding.

One of the things that you talk about is the importance of understanding that your overall revenue is related to four major components. How much traffic you're getting, what your conversion rate, percentages of that traffic, what the average order value is in terms of how much money they're spending with you and then how frequently they buy and are they repeat customers and that kind of stuff. And that all of these things ultimately then equate to your revenue. And that's the case with pretty much any business, whether it's E Comm or it's not. And so, I would love to dive into those things a little bit deeper with you and talk about some of the things that you do in terms of helping businesses to optimize and improve these different areas of their company.

Amara Abara: Yeah, 100%. So. So I really like that formula because a lot of the people complicate, you know, what's required to grow their business, where clients start getting it super complicated and they start freaking out about all the things they should be doing because they're looking at their competitors. I've always brought them back to this formula. Focus on your traffic, focus on how well it's converting, focus on how much people are spending with you on your store, your AOV and focus on bringing them back. So, this

is it. So, my specialty is really focused on the CRO. So, the conversion side of things, improving the AOV and also bringing people back.

But I can also talk about the importance of traffic, making sure that you're not Only focused on paid traffic is great. You're probably running Facebook ads. If you're an entrepreneur, listen to this. You're probably doing something related to that, but making sure that you're not super dependent on paid ads. Making sure that you've got an organic traffic strategy, because you can't really control what happens on this platform. So, you might change their algorithms. You may lose your account. You know, a lot of people can, could probably empathize with what it's like to lose your Facebook account and having to deal with Facebook support. So, you want to make sure that you diversify your traffic sources. Once you've got that covered using search, using things like the *Dream 100*, which Russell Brunson talks about quite a lot, you can do a lot of things to like, you know, make sure that you're diversifying your organic traffic.

Matt Bowles: Let's go into some of those techniques a little bit and extrapolate and share what they are and how to sort of use them. Because your presentation that you did here at the Nomad Fest was called how to double your eCom revenue without increasing your ad spend. Basically, how to do this stuff without needing to spend money on paid ads, which I think was incredibly valuable. The room was packed and people got a lot of value out of it. So, I'd love to see if you could go a little bit more into some of your tips for increasing your organic search traffic, your word-of-mouth traffic, and maybe explain a little bit more what the Dream 100 technique is and how that works.

Amara Abara: Yeah, sure. So, with search traffic, you want to make sure that you're creating really valuable content to start with. That's really the table stakes. And once you do that, you want to make sure you're promoting that content for backlinks. And that helps you build your domain authority. Because in order to rank well, you need to first of all have really relevant content. And you need to prove to Google that people also link back to your website. So, this is where the promotion of your content for backlink comes in. And also, another thing that a lot of people don't focus on is looking out for where their audience is congregating already, right. If they're forums where people are congregating, speaking about topics related to the products and services you're selling, then you want to be there and you want to be active.

Potentially ask a question that's related to a blog post you've written, maybe you can just do a TLDR and say, hey, look, by the way, if you're interested in finding out more, you can head back to my blog post and then links back to your store. So, these are ways you can improve your organic traffic. Because eCom businesses think this is just for content business, affiliate businesses, but for e commerce stores that really leverage on this, you will have a massive competitive advantage to people who are just relying on paid traffic because we're getting free traffic then and then. So, let's move on to word of mouth. Word of mouth, really cool. Basically, you're looking at how can you get people to talk about you without incentivizing them to do so? Because a lot of people who think about word of mouth as, oh, I'm going to give these customers a 20% voucher to say good things about me. But no, it's about how can you deliver an amazing product, build an amazing community that inspires people to talk about what your brand stands for and how they've had an amazing experience with your product.

So that's kind of the word-of-mouth marketing side of things. And if anyone's kind of really keen to see how a brand has done this really well, have a look at glossier. They're masters. Billion-dollar brand, 1.2 billion. And only 20% of their traffic comes from paid. That's a really good brand right there. The last one talk about is the Dream 100 and Russell Brunson talks about this. It's about curating a of people who inspire you, who've got like shared values once you do this, figuring out how you can get closer to them. And the reason

why you want to get closer to them is because these people have curated an audience that you would classify as your ideal customers. So, they already have your ideal customers. So that's why you want to get closer to them. You want to do that in a way that adds value to them.

So, a few tips on how to do this would be if they make a post on Instagram, it could be Twitter, wherever on social media, follow them, comment, especially if their post resonates with you. Comment on their post and let them know why this resonates with you. Also share it with your audience. You do this a few times and you become someone who's on their radar. And then potentially once you've had a few back and forth with them, maybe you can get them on a podcast, deepen that relationship with them. And then when the time is right and you feel that you guys can have some mutual exchange of value, say to them, hey look, I've got this thing that could be really good for your audience. Perhaps you'd be open to sharing it with them. And if you've got that relationship built up, then they're more likely to start with them than if you're just sending them a cold email.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, for sure, man. Well, I want to talk a little bit about how you actually approach your work with businesses and what the experience is like for a business, let's say, that comes and hires you to improve their CRO. What is sort of the first steps when you do a CRO audit of a business? What does that mean? What does that look like? What are you doing?

Amara Abara: Yeah, sure. So, so when a business approaches me, one of the things I like to think about is like a three-pronged solution. I first of all try to figure out what the problems are. So, what the problems are, where the problems are and why those are problems from the customer's point of view. So, we'll start with what the problems are. So, you want to figure out on a very holistic level where there's friction on the site, where people are leaving because maybe their questions haven't been answered or where you're just creating unnecessary friction when we perhaps where there's not enough clarity. And you can get answers to this on a broad level by looking at data in Shopify. For example, if you're on a Shopify store or even, you know, WooCommerce, whatever CMS you're on, you can get ideas on where there is friction in your traffic because you can look at how traffic is flowing, let's say from the homepage, the product page to the cart to the checkout and then see where there's a significant amount of drop ups, a disproportionate amount of drop offs, right. That gives you an idea of what the problems are.

Also, Google Analytics is a really good way to figure out what the problems are. By the way, good tip for your listeners. If you're not on GA4, you want to make sure you transition to GA4 because the existing version of Google Analytics is not going to be available next year. So, make sure your business is transitioning over. So, we've talked about what the problems are and how I figure out what those are. Then what I try to do is once I understand on a broad level what's happening in store, I want to dive in deep and figure out where it's happening. I do this by looking at heat maps. So, you guys have probably heard about Hotjar and Microsoft Clarity. These are tools that allow you to create heat maps of your store. So, you see exactly what people are interested in, what they're not interested in, where maybe they're rage clicks buttons that may not be working, where people are getting stuck.

And it can also watch live recordings of people on your store. This is very handy when you want to see. Okay, I understand that this is a problem and there may be a problem here, but what exactly is causing that problem? This is where heat maps come in. So, we talked about what the problems are, where they are, but at the end of the day, you didn't always want to look at it in isolation. You know, you want to look at it through the eyes of your customers. Why do your customers think these things are problems? And this is where qualitative analysis comes in. And I would recommend for any of your listeners, if you've got an

Ecommerce store or any business that's online, you want to make sure you've got live chat. You know, have live chat installed on your store so you can start having conversations.

Because the chances are if someone's having a problem on your store and they're frustrated, they want to speak to somebody, and if there's no live chat there and they have to send you an email or use your form, then you're just creating unnecessary friction. So have a live chat functionality there where they can like speak to you. And this enables you to gather really good chat logs which you can analyze over time. Another thing as well that could be really good to figure out why these are problems is when people have bought from you. Typically, if people send surveys attention, they will probably send surveys like a week later, two weeks later.

And if you're anything like me, I can't even remember what I had for lunch three days ago. So, what are the chances that people are going to remember exactly what experience they had on your store when they bought? So, you want to make sure that you're asking them on the thank you page as soon as they bought to say, hey, look what always stopped you from buying today. Was there any information that wasn't available on the store? You can ask them questions about your competitors, questions about what products you should be carrying that you're not currently carrying. So, all that kind of stuff. So, it's kind of like very simple. Think about what the problems are, are where they are and then why they're problems from a customer's perspective.

Matt Bowles: And then once you do that audit and you do that assessment and you have that analysis, can you talk a little bit about how you then move on to eliminate that funnel friction and increase the conversion and the way that you use a B test, experimentation and what that means.

Amara Abara: Yeah, absolutely. So back in the day I had an eCom store and I know what it's like for, you know, eCom store owners because they want to fiddle with stuff, they want to meddle, they want to change stuff based on what they think is going to drive really good performance, right. But I try to say that opinions don't drive performance. You want to use data driven insights. Data driven insights is what drives behavior, not opinions. And in order to get those data driven insights, you want to use some of the things I just talked about with the what, the where and the why. Now once you've got these ideas as to what could be causing problems, you want to then create hypothesis like because you're not saying for sure these are problems, but these are hypotheses that you want to validate. So, you want, okay, say for example, you think that people may not have a sufficient level of trust based on the content you have on your store in order to go on with the purchase.

So, a hypothesis could be that by improving or increasing the level of social proof on your product page, having things like UGCs reviews that would enable people have level of comfort to add your product to cart and then go on to purchase. So that's a hypothesis. We don't know that for sure, but that's something that we should test. Now once you've got that, you then want to do a B test, have the control which is the existing version and then have the variant which is the one that would have the changes you've made. So, in this case you want to increase your social proof. You can have elements do that like reviews, UGCs verify tags, stuff like that. And then you test that using tools like Google Optimize, or you could use like VW to actually make sure that the thing you think should drive positive behavior is going to do that, right.

And you see what the difference is in the conversion rate once you've done that and then implement the winner. So, this is kind of the process. It starts with research. You know, a lot of people will just have a look at this store and just based on gut feelings like figure out what changes to make. But I usually like to say

CRO is 80 research, 20 implementation research heavy. And this is where you get the ideas. And then once you've got the ideas, you want to validate them using an AB testing process.

Matt Bowles: And what types of results can businesses potentially get from doing this CRO overhaul and working with you. Can you give any examples of clients that you've had, businesses you've worked with and kind of like the before and after?

Amara Abara: Yeah, for sure. I think this is something that is a continuous process. I wouldn't go into CRO thinking that, you know immediately you're going to double your revenue. You want to compound these results over time. Just think about, about if you're able to have a CRO process in place where every quarter you're improving your conversion rates by 15%. Actually, I'd like to focus more on average revenue per user rather than conversion rate because there are a lot of things you can do to improve your conversion rate. I just have to slash the prices.

Matt Bowles: Right.

Amara Abara: And, and the conversion rate would improve. So, I'm more interested in average revenue per user. That's a more of a holistic metric to look at. And if you can improve this metric every quarter, say by, you know, very conservatively 10%, in a couple years, your business will be very different. You have a very, very different business. So, this is kind of the conversations I have with my clients. Like, hey, look, don't look at it like, oh, like, you know, we're running all this test and some tests work and some tests don't work. It's about the long game. And some businesses I've worked with, I've seen results where within a year they've been able to improve their conversion rates and average revenue to user by 50%. You know, some of them have doubled it over time. Time. Every business is really different. So, it really depends on where you're starting from and how willing you are to really dive into the process of experimentation.

Matt Bowles: That's awesome, man. Well, I want to ask you some questions as an entrepreneur and the first thing I think I want to ask you about is your mindset optimization. And I know you're really into that. Can you talk a little bit about your mindset as an entrepreneur and some of the things that you do and prioritize in that regard?

Amara Abara: Going, yeah, sure. You know, as a fellow entrepreneur, there's so many things that we all, we're meant to focus on. You know, we're meant to be doing this. And there's just so many hacks out there. So, I try to bring it back to the basics. How does my body and my mind feel? Because it's through this that I'm going to be able to serve my customers, my clients, and it's through this that I'm going to be able to do my best work. So, I like to try and focus on the basics like sleep for example. Because I've noticed that if I don't have really good sleep, I don't really care how optimized my office is when I'm using the best Mac or not. I'm just not going to be as effective. So just like with sleep and figure out how to optimize my sleep, try and track it as best as I can and do things that would enable me start the day feeling fresh. So that's kind of how I do that.

And then looking at my diet because at the end of the day food is fuel and of course we want to enjoy it. But as much as possible, looking at food as fuel and looking at how you can have really high-quality fuel that helps you achieve your goals is one way that you can get the most out of it. So obviously if you have a salad for lunch compared to a pizza, you're going to feel very different and that's going to have a knock-on effect on how you do your work and how you show up. So that's kind of how I think about the basics there at

working out the days where I get up in the morning, I'm like feeling like, you know what, I don't want to work out. I just, I just feel like today is not the day for it. I find out when I do, I just have a different day.

Things that are worrying me and maybe I'm in a loop inside my head, head just dissolve. So, I kind of look at it as sleep exercise, workout and then you can layer on top of that stuff like supplements. But try as much as possible to get the basics right before like, you know, layering the supplements on top of that.

Matt Bowles: And can you talk about in particular life as a nomad and life as a traveler when you're spending time in different countries and different time zones and there's cool stuff that you want to see and do in all of these places. How do you structure your work day and optimize your productivity while traveling?

Amara Abara: That's a really interesting one. It can be quite challenging and I'm a guy that, I love traveling, love exploring, but I also like a bit of structure and making sure that wherever I am, I'm set up to show up and actually be super productive. So, this is a travel hack that I could give your community is really making sure that wherever you're going to be staying is optimized for work. Of course, you want to have fun outside that, but if you're going to be working, you want to make sure, sure that wherever you're staying is optimized for that. And one thing that me and my girlfriend have done regularly is rather than go on Airbnb and think about, okay, where do we want to go? We think about, what do we want Airbnb to have where we want to go.

So, we start from there and think of, okay, it needs to have like laptop friendly desks. There needs to be like a potential gym nearby, like place where we can get organic food. And then that then would then decide where we go to. So, you could actually end up somewhere that you would have never have been to otherwise. Because if you just went down the typical route, I want to go to Lisbon. You go to like the stereotypical places. But if you start with, okay, look, this is what I want the accommodation to look like. They could end up in a really random city, which you wouldn't have visited if you didn't do that.

So, it's kind of like thinking about how can you make sure that the environment. Because I believe environment is destiny. So, if you shape your environment properly, then you're going to get the results you want. So, this is kind of how I ensure that I'm productive. And then of course, you know, get the work done during the day and in the night, you can relax and go to whatever restaurants you want to go to and then set up the weekend properly. So, to explore as much as possible.

Matt Bowles: I love it, man. Well, I definitely want to talk to you about some of the travels that you have done while running your business. One of the places that you and I both really appreciate is Turkey and the city of Istanbul in particular. We'd love to hear about your experiences in Turkey.

Amara Abara: Yeah, Turkey is an amazing place. Actually, reminded me a bit of Lagos. It looks slightly different. It's got very similar energy. And I felt very much at home when I got there. Actually. It was a road trip from Bulgaria area. We went to a few places in the Bulgarian and headed to Istanbul. And when I got to Istanbul, it was okay, look, we've just got to check this place out. It's got so much energy and it's really vibrant. And we headed to a bazaar where you can get all sorts of stuff, herbs, you know, you just get clothes, silk teas. And I got schooled there on how to sell. I ended up buying £50 worth of tea that I didn't really need because this guy managed to sell me on it. And the way he did it was basically using the principles.

You know, you guys probably read Robert Cialdini but he was very heavy on reciprocity and making sure I liked him. Build rapport. Told me about places in London he'd been to or maybe he had never even been to. Maybe he's just got a list of what to say when the customers come around. So yeah, I've been to this place, blah blah, built rapport with me, sat me down in the shop, gave me a really nice tea, served me biscuits and by the end of it I was like, I've got to buy from this guy. I feel like I know this guy now. So, I end up buying loads of tea for this him. And funny enough, I actually didn't drink the tea. It was a really good lesson on how to sell.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, man, I totally relate to that. I feel like I learn so much about sales when I'm interacting with a lot of these street vendors in particular in these different cities and in these markets and bazaars in these different cities. So much talent in terms of the sales game and it's just an incredible experience just going in there to sort of negotiate and go through the sales process. Even if you know you're going to buy it. I'm definitely going to buy this. But going through the negotiation kind of haggling process and doing it in a light hearted, fun way where your kind of laughing and they're laughing, you're having a nice time and you're building that rapport and you have that really cool kind of connection and then at the end they're going to sell you and you're going to buy it. You kind of know that's how it's going down. But it's a really fun process and I have just been like you, so impressed with so much of the sales technique that these folks have learned and deployed. It's amazing to see.

Amara Abara: Yeah, it's phenomenal actually. If I'm going to expand my sales team, I'm definitely going to think about going back to the bazaar to hire some folks from there because they've got it naturally.

Matt Bowles: Yeah. And I think Lagos, Nigeria is one of the most incredible places for that anywhere in the world. Talk about entrepreneurial mindset in terms of folks that are selling stuff there. I would love to hear about some of your experiences going back to Lagos as an adult and experiencing Nigeria. How has that been for you?

Amara Abara: Yeah, it's been very interesting. I stayed in England for quite a while and I didn't go back until much later and actually been back four times. Last time was last year. I was trying to Renovate my house in Lagos. It's a very interesting experience. It made me very grateful for the opportunity that I have right now. You know, I was just kind of born a British citizen just by the virtue of my mom being. Being a British citizen, right. I didn't earn it, right. So, I was like, okay, this guy is a lot smarter than I am. A lot of them are doing really good stuff, but they just don't have the opportunity to be in England. So, it made me very appreciative of the fact that I've got this passport enables that gives me access to the rest of the world. And also, it just also made me appreciate the hustler mindset that we talked about back then.

These guys, they don't give excuses, man. You're on the road. And because we don't have country set up in a way that that can't necessarily take care of themselves. We don't have a social blanket like you have in the Medicaid and Social Security in the U.S. and in the UK, you know, people can go on the door if they don't have a job. There's nothing like that in Nigeria. So, the people like, yeah, like you really need to figure it out yourself. So, you've got kids or teenagers, the people just like hustling on the street selling stuff. And it sort of infuses you with energy to like go back and be like, you know, no excuses, just get on with it. Because there are people who have less than you have who actually just. Yeah, just crush.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing, man. Well, what have been some of the fun highlights of going to Lagos, particularly going there in December. Can you describe for people that have never been to Lagos and why as people might want to go to Lagos? What is it like, man?

Amara Abara: Yeah, I mean, if you love to party, Lagos is a good place for that. Especially during Christmas. Yeah, we definitely let loose during Christmas. There's a lot of drinking and eating, you know, love jollof rice and there's like starbia and golda flowing around. A good place to go to would be the shrine. If you've heard about Fela and Fela Kuti, this is where he came up. This is so, you definitely want to go to the shrine if you want to listen to the original Afro beats. So that's a good place to go if you're interested in art. The Nika at gallery, her story is amazing how she came up and how for female entrepreneurs in Nigeria, so they're slightly different than he is over here. So, they have more friction over, over there. So go over there and see, you know, what she's built. It's really amazing. The Lekki Conservation Center is also a really good place to go if you, if you want to be near the beach. Lekki beach is amazing. Really good food, really good Suya. You know, if you're into me, you'd love that as well. So, yeah, these are some places I would definitely recommend.

Matt Bowles: So, I had the amazing fortune of meeting Nikkei in person. I was at the gallery, which is unbelievable. I mean, it is one of the most incredible art galleries I have seen anywhere in the world. I mean, I mean, period. It was unbelievable. I'm blown away by the art in there. And she is there in person and I got to meet her and talk with her and hang out with her and my friend who was there with me. Nikkei invited both of us to go with her back to her village and stay in her compound and go to this yam festival. Yeah. And I wasn't able to go because I had something else. But my friend Tiffany Green, who's been on The Maverick Show and actually talked about this experience on The Maverick Show, went and rode with Nikkei and her crew and they took her all the way there to the village, stayed in her compound, went to the yam festival, the whole thing, man. So, it was really amazing and really special to meet her. I mean, what an extraordinary human being.

Amara Abara: Yeah, funny story actually. You know, I was telling you I was working out of this co working space in Shoreditch and I was sitting next to this mixed-race lady and we were chit chatting with her and it turns out that she's Nika's daughter, you know. Yeah, like, yeah, I'm going to be heading back to home tomorrow. I'm going to be at the art gallery. So, yeah, it's a small world.

Matt Bowles: It's pretty wild, man. But yeah, I have been to the Fella Shrine in Lagos and so much. Just amazing, amazing stuff there. So, I've definitely been telling everybody about it since I got back. So let me ask you this, Amara. When you think back on all of this travel that you've done over the years, how do you think all of that travel has impacted you as a person in terms of your personal growth? And why do you continue to, to travel today? What does travel mean to you?

Amara Abara: Coming from where I have come from and knowing that I've been privileged with this passport, the British passport, and he's given me access, why wouldn't I make the most out of it? I didn't want to just be in London. I want to see the world. And going to different parts of the world, especially being from Nigeria and like, experiencing life in England, being gone to China and all these different places, it gives you perspectives on different cultures and helps you empathize with them. Say, okay, this is why they do things like that. And also helps you create art for yourself. Be it your business, where you can infuse learnings from these different cultures into what you're doing enables you stay away from the sameness. Because if your competitors are all getting their ideas from where they are, then all the products and ideas are going to be the same. So, I think travel enables me to see different things, and it gives me inspiration that I can bring back into my life, just not only to improve my life, but also my business.

Matt Bowles: I love that, man. I think that is an amazing place to end the main portion of this interview. And at this point, Amara, are you ready to move in to the lightning round?

Amara Abara: Let's do it.

Matt Bowles: All right, man, first question. I did not prep you for this, but I have confidence you can do this off the top. Which country has better jollof, Nigeria or Ghana?

Amara Abara: Of course, I'm going to rep Nigeria. Right. I mean, Ghanaians do have really good jollof rice, but, yes, it's got to be Nigeria.

Matt Bowles: Can you explain for folks that have not had jollof rice yet what it is and what the significance of this dish is?

Amara Abara: Yeah, so jollof rice is a mixture of rice as well as tomato stew. Stew. So, it starts off with tomato stew that's sort of brewed with really good stock. If you're into chicken, beef, whatever it is, I just brewed in that stock. And at the end, you put the rice in and you let it simmer. Just leave it to simmer for a bit. And you can have it with plantain. Have it like, you know, meat, whatever it is. Have a nice cold drink. Yeah, I definitely recommend, if you haven't had your love rice in London, go to Mama Calabar. She will hook you up with some good jollof fries. So, you probably know where to get in the U.S. but, yeah, highly recommend it.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, Amara, what is one book that has significantly impacted you over the years you'd most recommend people should read?

Amara Abara: So, a lot of books have had big impact on me. I love books because you can dive into people's minds that people who have really put together the artwork spend a lot of time putting together that and one book that stands out all the time for me is [Four Thousand weeks by Oliver Burkeman](#). And the reason why this book has had a big impact on me, it's enabled me appreciate time. I'm interested in productivity, but a lot of productivity books out there focus more on the tools and tactics of being productive. But this guy, it's like unveils why you should be productive from the point of view that you don't actually have that much time, you think you're immortal.

Matt Bowles: Right?

Amara Abara: Right. And we all know this intuitively. He helps you understand it. And this book really helped me understand why we should look at it from sometimes that we are time, rather than looking at time as an abstract notion or like a clock on the wall, we are being spent. And once you understand the fact that you're being spent, it puts things into a whole different perspective, right.

Matt Bowles: That's amazing. I have not read that book. I'm going to go get it right away. And we're of course going to link it up in [the show notes](#) as well, so everybody else can find it there. Amara, what is one travel hack that you use that you can recommend to people?

Amara Abara: Yeah, I'd say the one that has worked for us is the one I shared earlier. If you're flexible and you're not really that fussed about the city you go to and you just want to have an interesting wild experience. I'd say start from the rooms, start from the Airbnb that you want to stay in. Pick the ones that have really good beds. You can see that laptop friendly desks, places that are close to a gym. Maybe they've got like a nice organic store there. Spec out the house and then figure out where the house is and go there, you know, and it just gives you a whole different experience that people who just like, just go to, you know, the box. Standard locations that we all know.

Matt Bowles: I love it, man. All right. If you could have dinner with any one person who's currently alive today that you've never met, who would you choose?

Amara Abara: I've got to say Naval Ravikant. Yeah, he dropped some bombs on Twitter, if you know him. And he's got an almanac as well that was put together. And the reason I like him is that he's able to distill complex ideas into very simple tweets, sentences. His stuff, his content is just dense with wisdom. So, I feel like he's the kind of person that, you know, if he spends an hour with, you know, two hours with having some dinner, you would get so much more out of it because he's able to just convey so much in terms of wisdom within a short space of time. He's an angel investor, founder of angel list, early investor in Uber and whatnot. So, yeah, that's. That would be the guy I'd go for.

Matt Bowles: That would be an incredible dinner. All right, Amara, knowing everything that you know now, if you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to your 18-year-old self, what would you say to 18-year-old Amara?

Amara Abara: This is advice that I'd like to take more seriously. Now, if I could go back, I would definitely teach him about compounding interest. And just let him understand just how you understand it technically, but let him really understand it from how he could impact his life and understand it from the point of view that it's not just about compounding returns in the market, but compounding in every area of your life, relationships. How can you compound the benefits you're getting from your relationships? How could it compound the benefits you're getting from your health? All aspects of life are something that I would help him appreciate a bit more.

Matt Bowles: All right, of all the places that you've now been in the world, what are your top three favorite travel destinations you'd most recommend other people should at least visit?

Amara Abara: I'm in Hamburg now and there's a reason for that. I love Hamburg. I'd say it's a piss off a few Londoners there, but it's a less neurotic version of London. You know, you've got access to really cool nature, good quality of life. And I really love Hamburg. But apart from that, I enjoyed going to Cape Town. Having been in Africa for the first 16 years, I've never lived in an African country apart from Nigeria. So, it's really interesting to visit South Africa and see Africa from a different lens. And Cape Town was very cool. Amazing culinary game there. Their food is amazing and the culture there is also phenomenal. One more place, I would say Istanbul. If you're interested in figuring out the energy that we're talking about and also learning a bit about sales, I'd say definitely go to Istanbul.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, what are your top three bucket list destinations? These are places you've never been highest on your list. You'd most love to see. See.

Amara Abara: Right, so I'd love to see more of Africa. So, I want to go to Ghana to actually see whether the Jollof rice is actually. I want to sample it for sure. So, I'll start with that. And then Tokyo. You know, I've done China, but understand it's very different to Japan. I want to see the difference. Also very interested in, like, meditation, so exploring, like Zen meditation as well would be cool there. And Austin, Texas, seems to be the hottest place right now in the U.S., right? So, yeah, I would love to also check that out.

Matt Bowles: Very cool. Yeah. No, you and I had a conversation about Austin the other day, and I was recommending that if you're going to go there, see if you can get to overlap with the South by Southwest Festival, because that is really something to behold.

Amara Abara: That's a great tip.

Matt Bowles: Yeah, man. All right, Amara, for the last question, I'm going to ask you to name your top five favorite Afrobeat artists. Whoa. Before we name the five, I'm wondering if you can just share a little bit about. About Afro beats in general and what they mean to you and why you love the music genre.

Amara Abara: Yeah. So, growing up, I was a big fan of hip hop in R B, and I still am a big fan of hip hop and R B. And back then, Afrobeat were still on the come up. We had, like, the Plantation Boys. I'm not sure if any of your listeners know the Plantation Voice. What's it called? Tubaba. We had that as well. Yeah. Seeing how it's grown and how the world has adopted it. I mean, funny story, I went to the gym the other day in Bulgaria, Bansko, and they were banging out some Afrobeat. And there was actually they were singing in Yoruba. And these guys don't understand it. So I was, like, just very proud of the fact that. That we've got into all these areas. You know, they've had so much reach, and it's all very positive. One of the things that I like about the fact that Afrobeats listen to hip hop sometimes, that it can focus. Focus on a few negative things. Like, they can be like some, you know, lyrics around violence and whatnot. And I just love the fact that Afrobeat is just about pure enjoyment, you know, just like living life and being the fact that I'm from Nigeria and also listening to some of the words they speak in Europe, it's like, obviously quite makes me reminisce on the good old days, you know, growing up in Lagos. So that, yeah, that's what it means to me.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. All right, Amara, who are your top five favorite Afrobeat artists?

Amara Abara: All right, so I've got to give props to Malik Berry. Love his work ethic. You know, just bringing out the bangers upon bangers upon bangers. So, Love that burner boy. Of course, making waves abroad. Not really well known is racy got some really good bangers as well. Run town. These guys are from the eastern part of Nigeria so I've big them up. So yeah, run town is also a really good artist to listen to la. He's got some really good bang as a young guy coming up as well. And AOT 22. Yeah, he's a good one. So yeah, that's a good list to keep you busy.

Matt Bowles: Amazing. Well, we are going to link all of these up in [the show notes](#) so folks can just go to one place at [themaverickshow.com](#) and there you're going to find everything that we talked about in this episode. All of the afrobeat recommendations, the book recommendations and everything else that we have referred to in this episode will be there. You can just go there and get the links to everything. Amara, I want you to let people know at this point how they can find you, follow you on social media, get in touch with you. If people are interested in learning more about your services, they have E comm businesses, that kind of thing. How do you want people to come into your world?

Amara Abara: Yeah, sure. So, if all the stuff I've talked about with regards to conversion optimization is interesting in then I would head over to [ideas.amarabara.com](#) and I'm offering a list of the process I use for going about finding these ideas. So, if you're interested in my process, you want to see how I go about finding out gems and insights to optimize my clients' websites. I've got a really good document there that you can get. Otherwise, you can hit me up, you know via email [aamaraabara.com](#) amazing.

Matt Bowles: We're going to link all that up in [the show notes](#). Just go to one place at [themaverickshow.com](#) go to [the show notes](#) for this episode. There you'll find all of Amara's contact info and everything else we've discussed on this episode. Amara, this was amazing brother. Thank you for coming on the show.

Amara Abara: Thanks for having me brother. Had fun.

Matt Bowles: All right, good night, everybody.